



14-11

PROCESSED
JAN 03 1997
CTU LIBRARY

Light...

on a New World

Published for the Bexley Christadelphian Ecclesia by



*Light Bible Publications,
John Cordial, 15 Wilton Drive, Ditton,
Kent ME20 6PL, England*

EDITOR

*Colin Dryland, 116 Greenvale Road,
Eltham, London SE9 1PF, England.*

CORRESPONDENCE SECRETARY

*Peter Webb, Orchard Croft, 3 Kings Acre,
Otham, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8UP, England.*

VOLUME FOURTEEN NUMBER 11 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1996

CONTENTS

In the Footsteps of Christ (2)	page 1
Bible Truths	page 8
Cover Picture	page 9
News & Views	page 10
Bible Manners and Customs	page 11
Sayings of Jesus	page 18

In the Footsteps of Christ (2)

IN THIS SECOND article which follows the journeys of Jesus during his ministry, we begin our review where we left the account last time. Jesus was in Jerusalem, where he had gone into the temple and cleansed it of the traders and their commercial activities, bringing upon himself the wrath of the religious leaders.

NICODEMUS AND BAPTISM

In the darkness of the night in Jerusalem, Jesus received a visitor, a religious leader called Nicodemus. He was anxious that he should not be recognised, since he was an important man in Jewish society. He approached Jesus secretly, frightened lest he should be caught by his fellow Jews and religious leaders associating himself with this young teacher, who seemed to be setting himself up against the Jewish religious rulers.

Nicodemus had recognised that the miracles he had seen performed, marked Jesus out as a man of God. Indeed this was the purpose of the miracles - to give authority to Jesus, and this Jewish ruler knew this. Jesus showed to Nicodemus the way to life, the way to enter into the kingdom of God by being born again, through baptism. Here we see in John chapter 3 the importance of baptism, without which we cannot enter the Kingdom of God.¹

John's Gospel record then focuses our attention on some important aspects of the ministry of Jesus, who, with his disciples, came back to the land of Judaea. We read that his disciples baptised believers, thus endorsing Jesus' words to Nicodemus. John the baptist, we are told, was also at that time baptising in Aenon, *'because there was much water there.'*² This shows us the need for total immersion in water, which is true baptism, which must be preceded by belief and repentance.

¹John 3.1-21 ²John 3.23

JESUS IN SAMARIA

From here, Jesus, knowing that the religious rulers had heard of his activities, moved away from the area and back to Galilee, passing first through the Gentile province of Samaria. Wearing with his travelling, (showing us that he was a man like us, with our feelings and human frame), Jesus sat by Jacob's well. A well exists there today. It was originally dug by Jacob about 1,700 years before Christ. His disciples had gone away to buy food and as Jesus sat alone, a local Samaritan woman approached the well to draw water. We can picture the scene, with Jesus exhausted, and sitting by the well, the impressive scenery of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim around him, looking down a picturesque valley. This woman was a descendant of the colonists who had been placed in Israel by the Assyrians hundreds of years before, when Israel had been removed from their land on account of their godlessness and wickedness. There was at this time much antagonism between these 'foreigners' and the Jews, who would have nothing to do with them.

The woman came near to draw water and was completely surprised when Jesus, a Jew, talked with her, since the Jews hated the Samaritans. Jesus in his conversation with her opened her eyes to the purpose of God concerning his Messiahship; of God seeking men and women, Jews or Gentiles, to worship Him in spirit and in truth and that he (Jesus) was able to provide '*the water of life*' to those who came to him.

The important principle shown to this Gentile woman is still applicable today, for God still requires those same qualities to be exhibited in those who worship Him. These incidents in the life of Jesus teach us important lessons, which is why God has caused them to be left on record for us to read.³

After Jesus had remained in that area for two days and preached to the Samaritans, many of these people believed on him, unlike many of his own people, the Jews, who were openly hostile to his teaching.

A JOURNEY NORTH TO GALILEE

Jesus must have felt at home with the Samaritans who gladly heard him, but his mission was primarily '*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*'⁴ He

³John 4.5-42 ⁴Matthew 10.6

could not neglect his fellow countrymen, the Jews. Probably with this in mind he decided to go back to the fertile ground of the Galilee area. Moving away from Samaria, Jesus journeyed, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim, into the open hill country to the North, entering the gorge to the South East of Mount Carmel and through the valley of Esdraelon, into Galilee. He returned to Cana, where he had performed his first miracle.

News soon travelled around that this teacher and healer was back and one of Herod's officers, a nobleman, sent a message to Jesus to come and heal his son, who was at the point of death in Capernaum, some 18 miles away. Jesus did not do as requested, but gave the command to the nobleman to go home, for his son was cured. The man believed and on his way home was met by his servants, giving him the joyful news concerning the recovery of his son. He was informed that the hour of his recovery, was the very hour in which Jesus had given the command and as a result both he and his household believed. The power of healing demonstrated by Jesus was amazing, and could not be argued against. John records that this was the second miracle that Jesus did, having come out of Judaea into Galilee.⁵

FAREWELL TO NAZARETH

From his short stay in Cana, Jesus made what would seem to be his farewell visit to his home town of Nazareth, where he again taught in the synagogue, showing that his coming was to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus always made it plain that he came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets and here in the synagogue, he read from the book of Isaiah the prophetic message concerning his mission, to preach good tidings (the Gospel) to the meek, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives.⁶ For this assertion Jesus received, as did the prophets themselves, rejection from his own people. Therefore, while he was in this region he did no mighty works because of their unbelief, demonstrating that a prophet is without honour in his own country. The people of Nazareth, his own relatives and old friends had rejected him and so he had to flee to avoid the death which was intended for him, the people having decided to cast him down from the hill on which the city was built. So Jesus journeyed the 18 miles or so back to Capernaum, on the Northern shore of Galilee.

⁵John 4.46-54 ⁶Luke 4.16-21



Looking towards Nazereth, where Jesus lived, from Mount Tabor

AT CAPERNAUM

Here at Capernaum, Jesus entered a very important and busy phase of his ministry, calling again Peter, Andrew, James and John to his service. It would seem that they had gone back to their previous occupations until sought out again by Jesus.

Having been rejected by his own kinsmen, Jesus was no doubt in need of companionship as we all are, and these men were called to be his true companions and friends during the rest of his ministry. Then Jesus called the tax collector, Matthew and with these chosen men, began in earnest his intensive ministry of healing and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was no stranger to Capernaum and he used the opportunity to preach to the Jews in the Synagogue, where they met every Sabbath day. His words were *'with power'* and large audiences listened to him every Sabbath. We are told that *'the common people heard him gladly'*⁷ and this has been repeated over the centuries until today. Jesus came to succour the poor and the needy who were rich in faith, not the rich and affluent, such as the spiritual leaders, who here at Capernaum again opposed him but could not silence him.

⁷Mark 12.37



The next stage of the journey of Jesus

In the synagogue he healed a man who was suffering mentally, amazing those around him and spreading the fame of him throughout the region.⁸ This was always a major problem for Jesus. Sometimes the crowds thronged to see him perform miracles, preventing him from concentrating on his main mission which was to preach the Gospel. He often sought solitude in the wilderness or in the homes of his followers. Here on one such occasion, in the house of Simon Peter, Simon's wife's mother was healed of a fever, with the result that in this region many sick people were brought to Jesus and he healed them. He healed also a leper, the poor diseased outcast from society. The man with a withered hand also experienced his healing power together with the Centurion's servant. The Gospel narratives are full of word pictures of Jesus working with the social outcasts, the poor and needy and those who would come to him, both Jews and Gentiles. An example of this is the calling already mentioned, of Levi also known as Matthew, the dreaded tax collector who worked for the Romans, but now having been enlightened, discovered the way to salvation in Jesus.

THE HARDNESS OF THE WAY

The work of preaching now needed to proceed and time was short. Jesus toured the region, preaching in the Synagogues, telling the good news of the Kingdom of God, the Gospel message of salvation for those with ears to hear. That same Gospel message is relevant today. It concerns the coming Kingdom of God upon this earth, with Jesus as king on the restored throne of David in Jerusalem, in fulfilment of the Divine promise to his mother Mary.⁹

Centred around the Galilee area, Jesus' ministry of healing and preaching in the cities and villages, brought him into contact with many people and the fame of him was spread abroad. Constantly on the move with his disciples, we find him seeking rest, but finding none. The demands of the disciples, of the sick and of those eager for his message took first priority, and much of the productive work of Jesus was done in the Galilee region, rather than in Jerusalem, where the religious leaders constantly stirred up trouble for him. Here in '*Galilee of the Gentiles*' was fertile ground, both literal and figurative, and Jesus sowed the word which brought good results, at least for a while. It is here that he told some of those well known parables including the parable of the sower. It is here that he stilled the storm on the sea of Galilee, showing the mighty power of God. His disciples exclaimed: '... What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'¹⁰

⁸Mark 1.21-28 ⁹Luke 1.32,33 ¹⁰Mark 4.41

The God-given power of the Holy Spirit was used without measure as he healed the sick, as he raised the dead, as he brought relief to the needy, as he fed the thousands, as he walked on the sea. Here was definite proof of the mighty works of God manifest in him, showing that he was the Son of God.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Here in Galilee, thronged by the multitudes, Jesus also attempted to get away from the crowds. With his disciples he went up into a mountain and delivered that famous Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew chapters 5 to 7. Here he showed that the poor men who had followed him, rich in faith, were the heirs to the glory which would come. Theirs would be the kingdom of God. Though in the meantime they would be hated and persecuted, they would mourn, they would hunger and thirst, ultimately they would have a great reward. Their job was to shine out as lights in a dark world of unbelief. This is a task to be carried out by all of Christ's disciples, even today and such actions will be rewarded.

The teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount describes the way of life expected of his disciples and the same applies to all who will follow Jesus. It is a call to service, but with the promise of great reward....to have a place in the kingdom of God....to be comforted....to inherit the earth....to be filled....to obtain mercy....to be called the children of God.

Through the words of the Gospel writers which were inspired by the Holy Spirit, we today can have this prospect too if we will only do as Jesus said:

'...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.'¹¹

Clive Brooks
Horsham, Sussex

¹¹Luke 9.23

BIBLE TRUTHS

NOAH'S ARK AND THE FLOOD

THE BIBLE RECORD of the way the earth was destroyed by a great flood and the survival of Noah, his family and a selection of animals in a huge ark¹ are treated as myth and legend and a story for children. Bible students, however, heed the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when he clearly endorsed the event as true in the Gospel records.²

The amazing thing is that there are about one hundred flood stories or traditions around the world. These are set out in an interesting book by Whitcomb and Morris, who also draw attention to the Gilgamesh Epic.³ This is a collection of eleven clay tablets found in Nineveh, that date from about 1635 BC. This written record is remarkably similar to the Bible record and describes how the gods were angry with mankind and decided to put an end to them by a flood.

The gods favoured one man Utnapishtim, warning him to construct a boat and fill it with animals of all kinds and also his family. Having done this, the promised flood came destroying all of mankind - only those in the vessel survived, eventually coming to rest on a mountain. Utnapishtim then sent out a dove, then a swallow and finally a raven. The raven did not come back and then the Assyrian record describes how they came out of the ship to offer sacrifice to their gods.



*Babylonian Tablet
1635 BC*

The account has interesting and re-markable similarities to the Genesis biblical record of this great event. There is of course some argument over which of these accounts was written first. Bible students are certain that the Gilgamesh record is a corruption of the Biblical narrative in Genesis, especially as Jesus himself used the record of Noah in his teaching. He regarded it as an historical event for all his followers to take note of and to learn the lessons he draws from it.

Ken Dennis
Dartford, Kent

¹Genesis 6 to 9 ²Matthew 24,37-39, Luke 17,26,27

³The Genesis Flood: J C Whitcomb & H M Morris

COVER PICTURE

AUTUMN WILL SOON be here in England once more, part of that endless cycle ordained by the Creator and confirmed in the promise to Noah: *'While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.'*¹ Our cover picture reminds us of this season of the year, showing the beauty associated with the changing colours of the leaves from green to crimson, burnt orange, canary yellow and many hues in between. In New England (USA), where this picture was taken 'fall festivals' are held to celebrate the changing seasons and the 'leaf peepers' come to observe these marvels of nature.

What causes the trees to change their clothes each year? We understand that the production of chlorophyll, which produces green leaves, slows down in autumn and causes the leaves to change colour - different species produce a wide variety of autumn colours and eventually the leaves begin to fall until only the evergreens such as pine and fir trees remain with their leaves unchanged.

Trees have very long lives and some have been known to live for 2,000 years or more. In the Bible, the tree is used as a fitting symbol of those who listen to God's word and put their trust in Him. The prophet Jeremiah wrote:

*'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.'*²

The Psalmist wrote similar words about those who delight in God's law:

*'And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'*³

The lesson is a simple one - but of vital importance. Unless we feed on God's word we shall **wither and fade away** just like the autumn leaves. However, for those who listen to God's message of hope and act upon it, the future can be **evergreen** with the prospect of life unending in the coming kingdom of God.

Editor

¹Genesis 8.22 ²Jeremiah 17.7,8 ³Psalm 1.3

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT KING?

WHEN JACOB LEFT his home to work for Laban the Syrian and to obtain his wives Rachel and Leah, he stopped at a place which he later named Beth-el. This was where he had his dream of the angels ascending and descending on a ladder which reached from earth to heaven. This was a turning point in Jacob's life. God repeated to him the Abrahamic promise of future blessing and Jacob promised to worship the LORD and to give him tithes. Then Jacob set up a pillar, anointed it with oil and called the place Beth-el, or, 'House of God'. He said:

'And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house...'

We recognise, of course, that the stone represented Jesus Christ, the anointed Messiah, who was the '*chief corner stone*'² of God's house, the temple of the saints and '*the way*' to God.

What has that to do with the next king? Well, according to a Celtic legend, Jacob's stone was taken to Egypt, Sicily and Spain, reaching Ireland in 700 BC to be set on the hills of Tara, where Irish kings were later crowned. Then it was taken by the Celts who invaded Scotland and in AD 840 it was erected at Scone by Kenneth MacAlpin. At Scone it was encased in the seat of a royal coronation chair and John de Balliol was the last Scottish king to be crowned on it in AD 1292. Then Edward I of England invaded Scotland in the same year and moved the stone to Westminster, where it sat in the base of the Coronation chair in Westminster Abbey.

According to the legend, 'where the stone is, the Scottish race shall reign'. When Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, King James VI of Scotland was crowned James I of England on the Stone of Scone, fulfilling the legend.

The current wave of nationalism which is very evident in Bosnia and in Israel and in many other countries, is a 'sign of the times' to Bible students. This has again raised the hopes of Scottish nationalists, not to mention the activities of the I.R.A. in Ireland. In 1950 the Scottish Nationalists stole the Stone of Scone and took it to Scotland, but it was returned to Westminster Abbey after only four months. The stone has recently been returned to Scotland. Now, the question of who is going to be the next king is again being widely discussed.

The legend is interesting, but the promises on the stone at Beth-el are even more interesting and soon we believe, to become reality. We wait, not for a Scottish king, but for Jesus, the 'King of Kings'. He will rule the world (including Scotland) as the anointed of God. We have God's promise on that.³

Richard Griffiths
Hartley, Kent

¹Genesis 28.22 ²1 Peter 2.4-7 ³Acts 17.30,31

Bible Manners and Customs

WE LIVE TODAY in a world which often fights its battles by remote control. It simply requires the pushing of a button to despatch a lethal cargo of explosives (or worse) for the destruction of the enemy. We have all become very familiar with the awesome weapons of war deployed by many of the more powerful countries in the world and have seen the terrible results in human suffering and misery. Warfare between tribes, nations and alliances has afflicted mankind almost from the beginning of time. Fighting is often resorted to, in a bid to put right perceived wrongs, when talking has failed to solve the problem. Aggression has been an established feature from time immemorial and much of the Biblical record is about battles which have been fought, some won and some lost. The Old Testament in particular records the exploits of fighting men and many young people have thrilled to the story of David and Goliath - the story of the young man who trusted in God and pitted his wits and his sling-stones against the giant Philistine who wielded a mighty sword.

Now, this article in the series '**Bible Manners and Customs**' is not going to be about warfare as such but rather the lessons that preparation for warfare provide for us. There are *spiritual* aspects which have much to instruct us in our service for Christ. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is good news of everlasting peace and this magazine is dedicated to spreading this message throughout the world. But there are lessons we can all learn from the life of the soldier. In Old Testament times, the foot soldier often used a staff, a dagger or a sword. These were 'hand to hand' weapons, used in close combat. Later on, of course, the bow and arrow presaged the era

of weapons which could strike from a distance. The infantry soldier, either in Biblical times or in more recent times, needed to have belts or webbing in which his sword or dagger could be kept at the ready. A dagger could just be slotted into the belt but a sword needed a scabbard in which it could be safely carried. It was a sharp weapon, able to decapitate an opponent or to pierce him through. A weapon must be ready for instant use, if it is to be effective.

There was an occasion in the history of Israel, after the days of Solomon and during the period known as the divided monarchy, when Ben-hadad the King of Assyria came against Israel when they were ruled over by Ahab. Now Ahab was a wicked king, who ruled over God's people about 870 BC. In fact, it was because of men like Ahab, that God brought upon His people nations like the Assyrians. It was punishment for disobedience on the part of both king and subjects. Ben-hadad sent a message to Ahab, in which he made it very clear that Ahab and Israel stood no chance at all against his great power:

'And Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.

And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine.¹

It was a confident claim! But, Ahab had an answer, even though he was clearly worried by these events:

'And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.'²

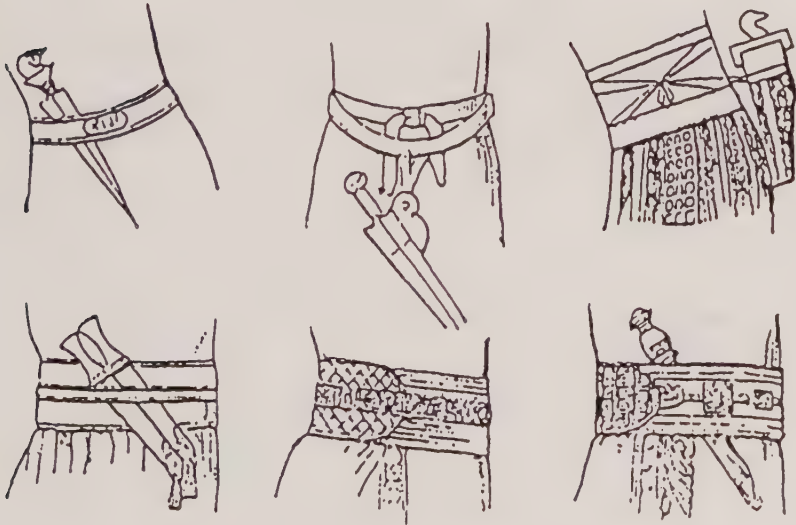
It was an eloquent way of telling someone 'don't be so sure - you haven't done it yet!' Notice, however, the reference to **harness**. This, of course, was the webbing or sash which held the sword of the soldier at the ready. In fact, Ahab was suggesting more about being *prepared* than necessarily putting on the military girdle and he was right to do so, given the circumstances that followed. The account in the first book of Kings tells us that, despite Ahab's tendencies to do evil in God's sight, it was

¹1 Kings 20.1-3 ²1 Kings 20.11

not God's intention that the Assyrians should succeed on this occasion:

'And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day: **and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.**'¹³

Although Ahab was right to caution Ben-hadad on this occasion, it was for Ahab himself to recognise that it was God who fought Israel's battles for them, when they were obedient. Ahab failed to learn the lesson and died in a later battle.



The above drawings are of Military style girdles.

In an earlier period of Israel's history, in the times of the Judges, Israel were under the domination of the Moabites. Again, it was disobedience on Israel's part that was the cause of them serving 18 years under Eglon, the Moabite King. When the nation cried out in their distress, God sent them a saviour, whose name was Ehud.

¹³1 Kings 20.13

‘But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.⁷⁴

There are one or two points of interest, here. Ehud was lefthanded - literally, the *Hebrew* is ‘shut of his right hand’. He was also a Benjamite and this tribe was later to provide some of the finest fighting men of King David’s army:

‘Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war.

They were armed with bows, and could use both the **right hand and the left** in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul’s brethren of Benjamin.’⁷⁵

It would seem that Ehud, however, was restricted to the use of his left hand although this was not to prove an obstacle in his mission to remove Eglon from the scene. On the pretext of a secret errand, Ehud manipulated the situation so that he had Eglon to himself, with fatal results for the King of Moab.

‘And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly...’⁷⁶

The record is clear that Ehud had concealed the double-edged dagger under his clothes and almost certainly by using a military style girdle. The military girdle was made of strong fabric, designed to sustain the body and to give support, while at the same time providing a location for sword or dagger. The military girdle was frequently made of leather, iron and bronze and professional fighting men often had them richly ornamented with silver and gold. When David and his small army went to deal with Nabal it is recorded:

⁷⁴Judges 3.15,16 ⁷⁵1 Chronicles 12.1,2 ⁷⁶Judges 3.20,21

‘And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they **girded on every man his sword**; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.’⁷

In Psalm 45 David writes prophetically about Christ in the time that is still future, when the Son of God will return to the earth as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the mighty warrior who will overturn the Kingdoms of men and establish the Kingdom of God.

‘Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.’⁸

Here, we are presented with an image of Christ far removed from the suffering servant who gave his life for the sins of the world. This is an image seldom referred to among the majority of Christian churches today, but it is a very real view of the work of Christ in establishing the Kingdom of God on this earth, which we believe will happen in the very near future.

What can these old customs taken from Bible times mean for the Christian today? We live in an era which forbids the true follower of Christ from taking the sword. Jesus was - IS! - quite clear about this:

‘And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.’⁹

So, for the true follower of Christ, there can be neither sword nor the place for a sword on our person. The blessings in the future age will be for those who have kept these all-important commandments of Christ our Saviour. Christ’s teaching in the sermon on the mount (see article entitled ‘Sayings of Jesus’ in this issue) should leave us in no doubt at all:

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the
children of God.¹⁰

⁷1 Samuel 25.13 ⁸Psalm 45.3 ⁹Matthew 26.51,52 ¹⁰Matthew 5.5-9

‘But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you...’¹¹

So, no sword and no girdle? Not true! We DO have a sword and we DO need to ‘*gird up our loins.*’ Yes, there are *spiritual* equivalents of both weapons of war and battle dress. It was the Apostle Paul who used the example of the well-equipped Roman soldier to press home the lessons which we must take from this short study:

‘For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...’¹²

So, the Christian’s weapons are not associated with death, but with life and with the defence of the true Gospel. The preparation for this work requires that we be as ready as the professional soldier is for the battle. Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus in Asia Minor in the first century and implored them to be ready for the work and it is a message for us today:

‘Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

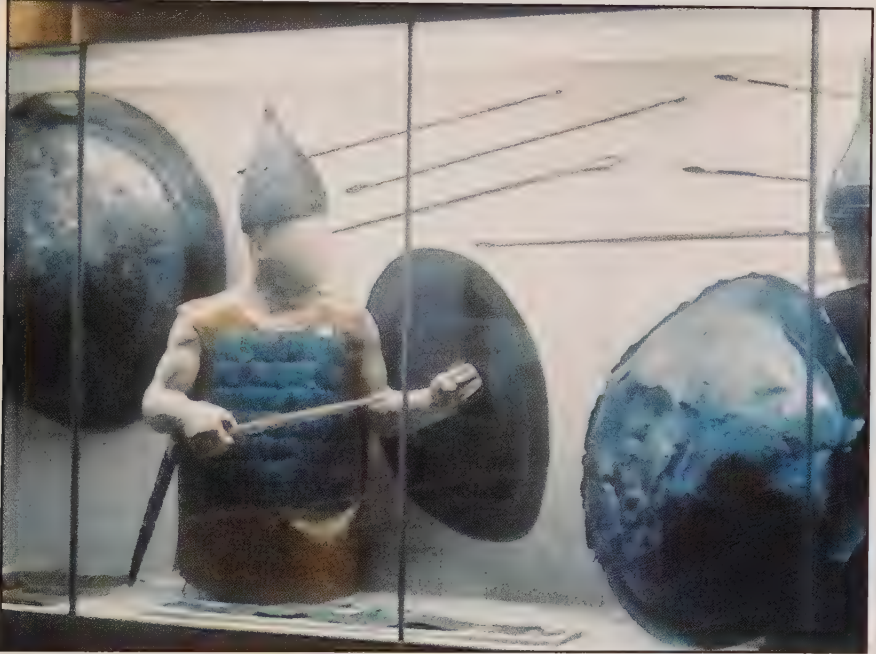
And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Praying always ...’¹³

¹¹Matthew 5.44 ¹²2 Corinthians 10.3-5 ¹³Ephesians 6.10-18

The whole armour of God. **Truth** must be our girdle and **God's Word** our sword and thus equipped we shall be able to fight the good fight of faith. It is a battle worth fighting, for with the Lord on our side we shall win through to the Kingdom of God, when the whole earth will be at rest and His Name all-glorious.

David Evans
Sidcup, Kent.



Assyrian armour and helmets in use at the time of Ahab. (See page 12)

Sayings of Jesus

Blessed are the meek

THIS SAYING OF Jesus forms part of a series of dramatic promises frequently referred to as 'The Beatitudes', a title derived from the Latin for blessing, the word with which Jesus prefaced all eight of these promises.

These blessings have been described as 'startling contradictions of the world's standards; these are sayings which no man could hear for the first time without a shock of amazement'.¹ All of them are striking paradoxes, promising blessings under circumstances which would normally be regarded in quite the opposite way. It would be worth the reader's while to pause briefly to read verses 3 to 12 of Matthew chapter 5.

The promise we are to consider is the 3rd in sequence: '*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*'.² As with so much of Jesus' teaching, this saying finds its origin in the Old Testament. We find these words in the Psalms:

'But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'³

The word 'blessed' has also been translated as 'bliss' or 'happy'. Each saying is, in effect, an exclamation: 'O the bliss of...!'; "How happy are...!" Each one is a promise of future blessing, but also of present contentment: happiness even in the presence of sadness, hunger, poverty, persecution. Jesus was saying that it is possible to find greater happiness under such circumstances, than it is in conditions which might be thought more

¹William Barclay 'The Plain Man Looks at the Beatitudes' p.13 ²Matthew 5.5

³Psalms 37.11

conducive to contentment, such as jollity, abundance of food, riches, ease and comfort in life. We shall see that this is certainly true of the situation we now have to consider. Meekness, correctly understood and put into practice, will most certainly lead to far greater peace of mind than arrogant self-assertion. And in addition, Jesus says, it will bring with it assurance for the future; the meek *'shall inherit the earth'*.

WHAT IS MEEKNESS ?

'The real greatness of this beatitude is hidden from modern eyes, because the word meek has come down in the world. To modern ears it describes a weak, flabby, milk and water spineless creature, lacking in all virility, submissive and subservient to a fault, unable to stand up for himself or for anyone else. But that is far from the original meaning of the word. The meaning of the word is, in fact, so great and so comprehensive that it defies translation'.⁴ Here, of course, Barclay is referring to the original Greek word, **PRAUS**. It is generally agreed that it is a difficult word to translate into English. The same is true of the corresponding Hebrew word used in the Old Testament.

The best way to appreciate the significance of the original words is to look at two examples of men who are described in the Bible as 'meek'. Thus it is written:

'Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.'⁵

Yet, as Barclay wrote:

'history has never seen a leader with more strength and force of character than Moses, nor a leader with a greater gift of righteous anger, when there was occasion for it.'⁶

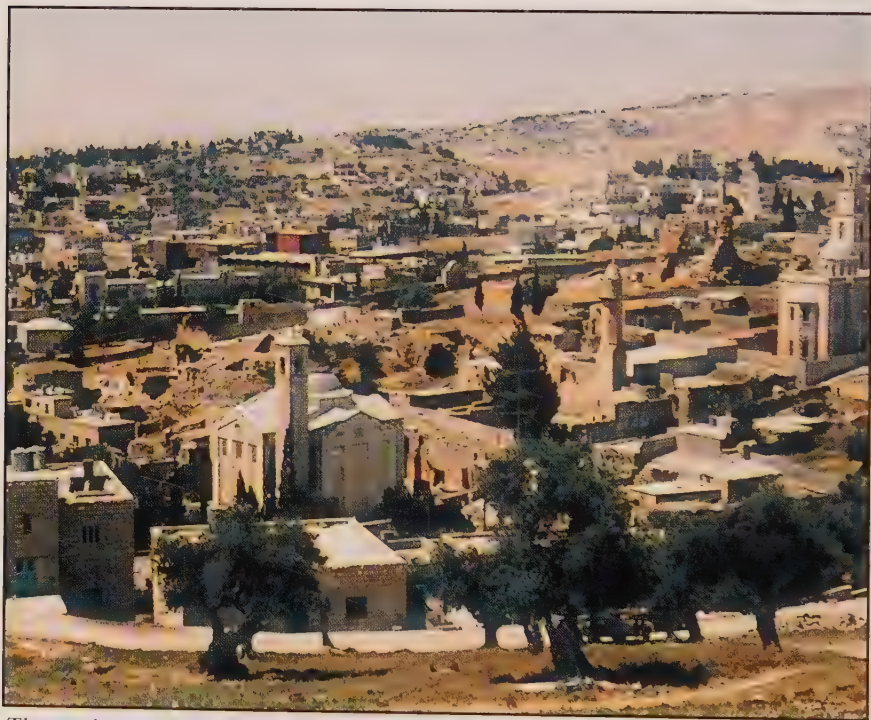
Jesus described himself as *'meek and lowly in heart'*.⁷ Yet again we see a tremendously strong character, none stronger; challenging the religious leaders of his day, showing great anger over their abuse of his Father's holy places, even violence, as he overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the temple.⁸

⁴Barclay *Ibid.* p.34 ⁵Numbers 12.3 ⁶Barclay *Ibid.* p.40 ⁷Matthew 11.29

⁸Matthew 21.12,13

So what is the meekness that Jesus says will be blessed? Primarily, it describes the attitude of a man or woman to God. *'In its Godward look it describes the man who gives to God the perfect trust, the perfect obedience and the perfect submission.'*⁹

*'It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting.'*¹⁰



The modern town of Bethany. Here Jesus rested in the home of Martha and Mary

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF MEEKNESS

We find a perfect illustration of such meekness in the response of the virgin Mary, when she was first given the astounding news that she was to bear a son who would also be the son of God: *'...Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word...'*¹¹ We find the same quality

⁹Barclay Ibid. p.38 ¹⁰W.E.Vine 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words' p.55 1981 Edition. ¹¹Luke 1.38

in Saul when, on the Damascus road, he was halted in his tracks by a sight of the glory of the resurrected Jesus: *'...Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?...'*¹² He went on to become the great apostle Paul, outstanding in his strength and vigour in preaching the Gospel, contending for its truth against all false religion amongst both Jews and Gentiles and vigorously resisting error when it came into the early church. Yet he never lost his meekness: *'For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.'*¹³ Throughout his life of preaching, Paul suffered greatly in a variety of ways.¹⁴ But he accepted it all as being the will of God. As he travelled to Jerusalem for what was to prove to be his last journey there, he was told that he would find himself bound as a prisoner. His response was typical: *'...I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'*¹⁵ This was Paul's meekness; his humble acceptance of God's will in whatever way it might affect him.

Paul was following the example of his beloved Master, who, as he faced the horror of the cross and even pleaded with his Father that, if possible, he might be spared this agony, yet he submitted himself totally to his Father's will: *'...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.'*¹⁶ Job had shown the same frame of mind: *'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him...'*¹⁷

TRUE HAPPINESS

This is true meekness. This is the way, the only way, to find true peace of mind in this life. The restless striving after things which men and women believe will bring happiness, will never achieve the blessedness promised by Christ. How beautifully this true happiness and blessedness is presented to us in the Psalms:

'My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quietened my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and for evermore.'¹⁸

This is the blessing Jesus promised for the present. But he promised even greater blessing for the future. *'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.'*

¹²Acts 9.6 ¹³1Corinthians 15.9 NIV ¹⁴2 Corinthians 11.24-27 ¹⁵Acts 21.13

¹⁶Luke 22.42 ¹⁷Job 13.15 ¹⁸Psalms 131 NIV

INHERITANCE OF THE EARTH

The word 'inherit', as used in the Bible, has a different meaning from the way in which we commonly use it. We commonly use the word to describe how we enter into possession of something which has been left in a Will; but in the Bible the word usually means to enter into possession of something which has been promised and foretold by God.

Further, it will help us to see the original meaning of the phrase, if we remember that it can be equally well translated: *'The meek shall inherit the land.'*¹⁹

What Jesus is referring to here, is nothing less than the fulfilment of the promise originally made to Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. Regular readers of this magazine will readily appreciate the significance of this. When Abraham first entered the land of Canaan, of which modern Israel is only a part, he was told by God:

'...Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.'²⁰

This promise was repeated by God several times to Abraham and again to his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. They all lived in the land, but the New Testament makes it perfectly clear that in no way was this to be regarded as a fulfilment of God's promise. Stephen, a first century preacher of the Gospel, said of Abraham: *'...He (God) gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him...'*²¹

In the letter to the Hebrews, the Apostle is equally blunt when writing of men and women of faith in former ages: *'These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.'* Then the writer added these very significant words: *'God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.'*²²

¹⁹Barclay *Ibid.* p.40 ²⁰Genesis 13.14,15 ²¹Acts 7.5 ²²Hebrews 11.39,40 NIV

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

What the apostle is saying, is that God's promise to Abraham has yet to be fulfilled and that when it is realised, then all true believers will share in its fulfilment. As Paul wrote to the Galatians: *'If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'*²³ Here we have the word 'heir', taking us back to the words of Christ and of the Psalmist: *'...the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'*²⁴

We can take the significance of the promise to Abraham a further step and so finally build up a complete picture of the meaning of the saying of Christ we have been studying. It is the apostle Paul again who makes it quite clear that the promise to Abraham, in addition to the wider application we have considered, had specific reference to the Lord Jesus Christ:

'The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds", meaning many people, but "and to your seed", meaning one person, who is Christ.'²⁵

Christ has been promised the inheritance of the land of Israel and indeed of the whole earth; indeed, more than inheritance - kingship. The whole earth is to become his kingdom, centred in Israel with its capital, Jerusalem:

'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.'²⁶

WHAT JESUS' WORDS MEAN FOR US

Jesus invites us to share with him this wonderful inheritance: *'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'*²⁷ This will be the kingdom of God on earth, when Christ returns and calls his followers for judgement; he will say to those of whom he approves: *'...Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you...'*²⁸

²³Galatians 3.29 NIV ²⁴Psalms 37.11 ²⁵Galatians 3.16 NIV ²⁶Luke 1.32,33

²⁷Revelation 3.21,22 ²⁸Matthew 25.34

Who will these be? They will be those who, in their lifetime, have been humble enough to believe implicitly what God has promised in His Word; humble enough to submit to baptism by total immersion in water;²⁹ humble enough to accept God's will throughout the remainder of their lives, obeying Him to the best of their ability; accepting gratefully His providential working in their lives whatever that might bring upon them and trusting implicitly that all is designed by a loving and merciful God, to lead them to His kingdom.

These are the truly meek, the truly blessed, who will inherit the earth and delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Eric Toms
Rockland St Mary
Norfolk



The Mount of the Beatitudes as it would have appeared at the time of Jesus.

²⁹Mark 16.15,16

The Christadelphians
believe the Bible (Old and New Testaments)
to be the wholly inspired and infallible Word of God.
Its principal theme is the salvation of mankind through the saving work
of the Lord Jesus Christ and the setting up of the kingdom of God
under his rulership when he returns to the earth.

*

LIGHT on a New World is published to provide
a better understanding of this true Christian hope
and the Correspondence Secretary will be pleased to arrange for the
magazine to be posted to any address on request.

*

The Christadelphians are very willing
to answer questions about Bible teaching
either privately or in the pages of LIGHT
and correspondence will be welcomed.

*

Please send your questions to:
The Correspondence Secretary, Orchard Croft, 3 Kings Acre,
Otham, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8UP, England.

*

Information about public meetings arranged
by the Christadelphians in particular areas and the names
of the nearest Christadelphian representatives
can be supplied by the publishers on request.

*

Light Bible Publications also
distribute the following books:

THINE IS THE KINGDOM
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Details available upon request.

*

The Lowfield Printing Company, Crayford, Kent

